

FRIENDSHIP HILL
(Albert Gallatin House)
Friendship Hill National Historic Site
223 New Geneva Road
Point Marion
Fayette County
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6740
PA-6740

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FRIENDSHIP HILL (Albert Gallatin House)

HABS No. PA-6740

LOCATION: 223 New Geneva Road, Point Marion, Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

DATES OF
CONSTRUCTION: 1789, 1798, 1823-24, 1895, 1901-03

PRESENT OWNER: National Park Service

SIGNIFICANCE: Friendship Hill is the home of Albert Gallatin (1761-1849), a Swiss émigré who rose from a western Pennsylvania legislator to the Secretary of the Treasury under Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. He was instrumental in arranging financing for the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark expedition, and the construction of the National Road. The house was constructed in a total of five stages, three under Gallatin, and is now a National Historic Site.

DESCRIPTION: Two separate families built Friendship Hill over a 120-year period, and today it has been restored to its ca. 1900 appearance. The most prominent section is the three and a half-story Stone House (1823), which features three bays of two-over-two windows. There is a wrap-around porch on the first floor, and the front door has diagonally-set leaded glass in the door and light above. Two dormer windows project from the attic, and a pair of chimneys anchor each gable end. This house is constructed in a grander scale than any of the other wings of the property. To the west is a two-story addition, the State Dining Room (1895), covered in stucco, with bedrooms above. Today it serves as park exhibit space and offices. To its south the house extends in an L-shape with two main wings, all covered in stucco. The adjacent wing has three parts. The Frame House (1798) was originally built with half-timbered framing members covered with clapboards. Stotz shows interior views of the first floor of the Frame House, which features decorative wainscoting carried to the full height of the fireplace end wall, with a finely crafted mantelpiece. The Stone Kitchen (1824) sits adjacent and is connected to the Servants' Quarters (1903) by an arched breezeway for service vehicles. The south wing consists of the afore-mentioned frame house, the original Brick House (1789), a two-story, two-room house constructed of local brick, and a south Bedroom Wing (1902), with two floors of multiple bedrooms. A two-story covered porch that runs along the east wall connects the wing to the rear of the main stone house.

HISTORY:

As a surveyor in the 1780s exploring territory west of the Alleghenies, Albert Gallatin purchased 370 acres along the Monongahela River in southwestern Pennsylvania. Here he dreamed of building a home where he could farm and start businesses to take advantage of trade on the western waters. Local craftsmen built Friendship Hill in five stages, three during Albert Gallatin's ownership, and two by the Speer family between 1895 and 1903. The 1789 brick house served as a simple frontier home for Gallatin and his wife, Sophia, until she died in 1789. Following her death, he threw himself into national politics and spent little time at Friendship Hill. He built the frame house addition in 1798 to provide for his second wife Hannah, and their son James. Following his retirement from public affairs, Gallatin sent his youngest son, Albert Rolaz Gallatin, to supervise construction of the grand stone house, built by Scotch-Irish craftsman Hugh Graham from 1821-23. Ochre-colored stone for the house was quarried along the Monongahela, and timber was cut at Gallatin's sawmill in neighboring New Geneva. Gallatin hosted the Marquis de Lafayette here in the spring of 1825. However, with his family eager to return east, in the summer of 1825 Gallatin moved to Baltimore for a year before a diplomatic mission sent him to London. He settled in New York City in 1830 for the last twenty years of his life, and never returned to his remote western outpost.

Albert Gallatin's western investments never reached their potential and he sold Friendship Hill at a loss to a fellow Swiss, Albin Mellier, in 1832. Nothing changed at the house until the Charles Speer family purchased the property. From 1895 to 1903 they added a state dining room to the west of the stone house, a south bedroom wing, and servants' quarters. The National Park Foundation acquired the property in 1979 and the National Park Service restored and remodeled the house. Friendship Hill has been open as a National Historic Site since 1984.

SOURCES:

Donnelly, Lu, H. David Brumble, IV, and Franklin Toker. *Buildings of Pennsylvania: Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, forthcoming.

Gallatin, Albert, House. Washington, D.C.: National Register Form (Added Information), 1992.

Stotz, Charles Morse. *The Early Architecture of Western Pennsylvania*. New York: William Helburn, Inc. for the Buhl Foundation, 1936.

Friendship Hill National Historic Site. "The House at Friendship Hill." National Park Service. Accessed 27 December 2006, available at: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/frhi/fhhousgd.htm>

HISTORIAN: Christopher H. Marston, 2007

PROJECT

INFORMATION: This short-form history was prepared to supplement photographic documentation of historic sites in western Pennsylvania. In 2005 Nicholas Traub photographed several sites for the *Buildings of Western Pennsylvania* publications, with funding from HABS/HAER/HALS. The Society of Architectural Historians cosponsored the photography project and is producing two volumes, *Buildings of Pittsburgh* and *Buildings of Pennsylvania: Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania* as part of their Buildings of the United States series, published by the University of Virginia Press. The documentation was facilitated by Lu Donnelly, Project Director, Buildings of Western Pennsylvania, for the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. The documentation was edited and transmitted in the Washington office of HABS/HAER/HALS by Christopher H. Marston, HAER Architect.

RELATED

DOCUMENTATION: Gallatin Sawmill-Eberhart Grist Mill, HAER No. PA-582.